

# Thursfield Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124086
<b>Local Authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	359580
<b>Inspection dates</b>	5–6 May 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Horwood

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The registered childcare provision, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	257
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Terry Turner
<b>Headteacher</b>	Loretta Frain
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 November 2007
<b>School address</b>	Chapel Lane Harriseahead, Stoke-on-Trent ST7 4JL
<b>Telephone number</b>	01782 512301
<b>Fax number</b>	01782 510590
<b>Email address</b>	office@thursfield.staffs.sch.uk

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	5–6 May 2011
<b>Inspection number</b>	359580

**Number of children on roll in the registered  
childcare provision**

**Date of last inspection of registered  
childcare provision**

Not previously inspected

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	5–6 May 2011
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed eleven lessons taught by eight teachers. Meetings were held with groups of staff, members of the governing body and discussions were held with some pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation including pupils' work, minutes of meetings, records of pupils' progress and school policies. The responses to 120 questionnaires from parents and carers were scrutinised.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Are there any significant variations in the progress of any groups of pupils within each key stage?
- What are the strengths in teaching and the curriculum that contribute to pupils' good progress?
- Are sufficient opportunities provided to support pupils' understanding of a range of cultural backgrounds?

## Information about the school

Thursfield Primary School is a larger than the average primary school. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds and very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than in most schools. The school has a lower than average proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and their needs cover a broad spectrum. There have been significant staff changes in recent years including the current headteacher who took up her post just before the last inspection. The school has achieved Healthy School status and has been awarded the Active Mark. There is a privately managed pre-school Nursery on the school site, which was inspected, and is reported upon, separately.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

Thursfield Primary provides a good education. It is a school where staff and pupils are happy and there is a strong focus on giving all pupils the best possible opportunities to achieve well in a safe and secure environment. Consequently, pupils like school which is reflected in their above average attendance. While, children make a satisfactory start to their education in the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils in both Key Stage 1 and 2 now make good progress and levels of attainment by the time they leave the school are above average and rising.

The headteacher provides good leadership; since the last inspection many aspects of the school's work have improved and the school has moved from being a satisfactory to a good school. Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the strengths and areas which require developing in the school and their self evaluation is accurate. A range of communication systems are in place, but they are not effective enough to ensure that all parents and carers feel fully informed. There has been good progress on improving the issues identified during the last inspection and the school has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

Fundamental to the school's success is the improvement in teaching. Good quality professional development of staff has taken place and good appointments have been made to fill vacancies. The headteacher ensures that staff are given responsibilities which use their skills most effectively. There is good teaching in each key stage, but this is sometimes inconsistent; occasionally teachers spend too much time introducing their lessons. Teachers use assessment data to monitor pupils' progress but there are variations across the school, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, in how well they use this information in their planning. In a few lessons planning does not clearly identify what pupils are expected to learn and tasks do not always provide sufficient challenge for pupils of all abilities. Pupils are becoming more involved in assessing their own progress but again this varies from class to class. Pupils agree that adults in the school help them to learn and that they know how well they are doing at school. Those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported in class and have additional individual support when necessary. Their progress has also improved and is now good.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school by:
  - ensuring that teachers' planning consistently identifies what pupils, and children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, are to learn and that tasks are challenging for all pupils

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- ensuring that teachers allow sufficient time for pupils to carry out independent work in lessons.
- Work with parents and carers to ensure that communication systems are effective by:
  - reviewing and increasing awareness of current systems
  - planning and implementing improvements.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

Pupils make good progress from their broadly average starting points to reach above average attainment by the time they leave school. They are helped to learn in lessons because their behaviour is consistently good and they all have very positive attitudes to learning. There are excellent relationships between pupils and adults and this encourages pupils to ask and answer questions confidently during lessons. Pupils say they enjoy lessons because they are fun. This was clearly seen in an outstanding Year 2 mathematics lesson when the teacher used resources well to motivate pupils. The use of a toy hedgehog moving along a number line collecting 'wiggly worms' was a good example and this excited pupils and kept them fully focused on their calculations. In a Year 2/3 mathematics lesson, pupils confidently explained to the inspector how to carry out the calculation by using 'Grandma Swag' and 'Snatcher Jack' to move along the number line. Teachers use effective strategies to ensure that all pupils were equally involved in learning, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities; teaching assistants competently support those pupils who need extra help. Consequently, all pupils achieve well and there are no significant variations in the achievement of any groups of pupils.

During discussions with pupils they were polite and confident. They could identify many things they liked about the school as well as the need for some extra shade in the summer at playtime. They feel very safe and say any bullying is very rare and is dealt with quickly. Pupils are enthusiastic about the responsibilities they have in school including being senior pupils, school councillors, recycling monitors, ringing the bell and helping in the classroom. They support the local and wider communities by raising money for charities which they choose. They also invite elderly residents into school to their harvest festival as well as attending a local civic remembrance service. They understand how to adopt healthy lifestyles and say they really enjoy the healthy snacks available at lunch time. They are enthusiastic about the many sporting activities available to them during and after school. They are very aware of the levels they are working at and say that teachers always tell them how they can improve. They show a good understanding of social skills and explain how they always look after those who need help and treat each other sensitively. All pupils have the opportunity to go on school trips and they have exciting memories of the residential trip to an activity centre. Pupils meet with pupils from other schools at sports activities but have few opportunities to interact with those from different faiths or cultural backgrounds. Nevertheless, their understanding of a range of cultures is satisfactory.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>3</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

## How effective is the provision?

Teachers have good subject knowledge and have excellent relationships with pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants work very well together and this contributes to good support and guidance in lessons. In good lessons the pace is brisk but in a few less successful sessions teachers talk for too long and pupils have insufficient time for independent work. Teachers set targets for pupils and this is well established across the school; they mark pupils' work thoroughly and give them good guidance on how to improve. The curriculum is broad and balanced and differentiated to meet pupils' needs and interests; all teachers use data well to inform them of progress and attainment, but in a minority of lessons this information is not used effectively to plan future work to ensure that all activities are sufficiently challenging for all pupils. Middle leaders are currently addressing this issue to ensure consistency across the school. Cross-curricular links are developing well and science is strongly based on practical activities. Teachers are following a more creative approach to promoting pupils' learning through linked topics and themes. The curriculum is enriched by a broad variety of visits and visitors including theatre groups and the vicar. The wide range of extra-curricular activities is well supported including a different physical activity being selected each year to promote healthy lifestyles and raise funds for the school. The after school dance club is very popular with boys and girls from Reception to Year 6 and more time has been made available to accommodate those who wish to attend.

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Pupils, parents and carers agree that pupils are safe and well cared for in school. Teachers develop individual education plans and plan good support for pupils, with special educational needs and/or disabilities, who are well integrated in lessons. These pupils speak enthusiastically about their learning and the support they receive. Good partnerships with external agencies and the local authority provide additional assistance for pupils with their academic and social needs. There are very effective links to support those pupils in potentially vulnerable circumstances. The links with Maryhill High include pupils visiting the high school and staff coming into Thursfield which helps ensure that pupils are well prepared for a smooth transition at the end of Year 6.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has a clear plan for the school and has identified strengths within the leadership team which she has helped to develop further. All staff support the headteacher's vision for the future. The school has good procedures to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its provision and staff have an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. There has been effective action to address previous issues that have become evident. The impact of actions to improve teaching and learning has been good and, although there is more to do to ensure consistency across the school, teaching has improved significantly. Members of the governing body are enthusiastic and have systems in place to monitor school performance and the views of parents and carers. This ensures they have a good understanding of how the school works, however, committee meetings are not frequent enough to give them a more detailed knowledge of the school's progress so that their role as a critical friend is limited. Statutory requirements are fully met.

The effectiveness with which the school promotes equal opportunities and tackles discrimination is good. Safeguarding arrangements are good, with good site security. Records of the suitability of all staff to work in the school are all up to date and risk assessments were all reviewed in February 2011. There are thorough records of meetings with external agencies, who respond quickly and efficiently, to support pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. School leaders understand their community well and have ensured the cohesion within the school is good. However, links with the wider and the global communities are less well developed. There are good links with the local community and most parents are pleased with what the school provides. The headteacher is aware that some parents are finding it hard to adapt to her different leadership style and has introduced procedures such as text messaging to make sure that



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they are informed of events. The school website is also being improved to provide more information for parents.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage is currently in a transition stage with temporary staff in post. Start of day procedures have been changed to ensure that all children have a snack and given time to talk to adults. Parents have the opportunities to talk to adults at the start and the end of the day but are concerned, that whilst the Early Years Leader is on maternity leave, there is not a permanent teacher. To ensure the best possible provision for children during this period the school has secured support through the local authority. The acting coordinator is developing her skills with determination to improve provision. Working closely with the local authority the early years team have simplified planning but this is not always specific to the age group and is sometimes too brief. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall and the balance between adult led activities and those the children choose is sound. Staff care for children appropriately and care guidance and support is generally good for children with additional needs, although occasionally teaching assistants are not fully utilised during all parts of lessons. Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills expected for their age and make satisfactory progress. Leadership and management, of the Early Years Foundation Stage, is satisfactory during this transitional stage; monitoring and evaluation has not always been sufficiently rigorous and there is scope to improve planning. Whilst all aspects of provision are currently satisfactory school leaders are working to establish permanent staffing and improve the provision as a matter of urgency.

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*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

## Views of parents and carers

Although parents and carers are confident pupils are safe there are very mixed views about some aspects of the school's work. The written comments indicate that many of the concerns are linked to the different leadership style of the current headteacher. There is not a consistent theme amongst these comments and many parents and carers have contrasting views. For example one wrote 'The headteacher does not co-operate with parents' but another wrote 'We have found the headteacher very approachable in discussing our concerns and dealing with them.' Several parents and carers were concerned about not having the opportunity to provide suggestions but inspectors found there are clear opportunities for them to do so. The text messaging system was introduced to keep parents and carers informed but many say the notice given of events is too short. The governors and headteacher are already working to improve the partnership with parents and carers including an updated website. Most concerns were linked directly or indirectly to communications between the school and parents and carers. Systems are in place to enable good communications but they do not appear to be working effectively. Other comments and views were considered as part of the inspection process and contribute to the findings in the report.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thursfield Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 120 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 257 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	49	41	65	54	6	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	57	48	60	50	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	29	24	65	54	19	16	5	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	33	28	59	49	22	18	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	36	30	69	58	8	7	3	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	34	28	64	53	16	13	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	24	67	56	20	17	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	26	22	57	48	14	12	5	4
The school meets my child's particular needs	36	30	64	53	13	11	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	34	28	57	48	13	11	10	8
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	18	59	49	19	16	12	10
The school is led and managed effectively	27	23	60	50	24	20	7	6
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	39	33	59	49	17	14	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



9 May 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Thursfield Primary School, Stoke-on-Trent, ST7 4JL**

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed talking with you and looking at the work you do. Your school is giving you a good education.

There are many things we admire about your school and these are a few of them.

You enjoy school and attend regularly.

You tell us that you feel very safe in the school because behaviour is good and there is a high fence around the school.

You all make good progress as a result of good teaching.

There are good relationships throughout the school.

A large number of you take part in the many after-school clubs and activities which the school provides.

These are the things we have asked the school to do to make it even better.

Ensure teachers plan their lessons so that you always know what you are to learn and that the work is sufficiently challenging for all of you.

Ensure that teachers give you sufficient time in lessons to carry out your own work. .

Encourage a closer working relationship with all your parents and carers.

All of you can help the school move forward by continuing to work hard. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

John Horwood

Lead inspector

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